

HERDSA connect

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The magazine of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia



Inside

Postcards from Malaysia and China; IT in higher education retrospective; economic analysis and higher education policy making; academic publishing hoaxes; cross-disciplinary and global communication; measuring attrition and retention



From the Editor

Maureen Bell

Roger Atkinson has been a stalwart contributor to HERDSA NEWS and now HERDSA CONNECT since 2004 – a magnificent innings. Roger never missed a deadline and always wrote with clarity and perspicacity. Now it is time to say farewell because Roger is hanging up his mouse as our IT in higher education writer. Roger's retrospective on page 14 highlights an interesting historical journey through his columns on IT in higher education.

Our cover image of students at Curtin University Malaysia celebrates international higher education. You can read more about higher education in Malaysia in the Postcard from long-time HERDSA member Beena Giridharan. The communication and collegiality expressed in the cover image reminds us that connecting students face to face on campus in collaborative learning still has value. From the UK our Feature writer Rob Cuthbert, Emeritus Professor of Higher

Education Management at the University of the West of England and Editor of SRHE News, shares his expertise in economic analysis and higher education policy-making.

Some of the more amusing academic publishing hoaxes are documented by Bob Cannon in his Meanderings column. Perhaps the hoaxers should have read Helen Sword's Wordcraft column which this time addresses the principles and techniques that help us communicate effectively across disciplines and share our research globally. Another piece of clear communication comes in the form of the new HERDSA Guide to Improving Teaching and Learning in Science and Engineering Laboratories reviewed here by former Head of Physics and Associate Dean of Engineering at the University of Wollongong, Bill Zealey.

Professor Marcia Devlin discusses official measures of attrition and retention while we showcase the importance of a teaching philosophy and an unusual form of assessment.

Following the successful HERDSA 2018 conference in Adelaide, the 2019 HERDSA New Zealand team are preparing for a stimulating conference in beautiful Auckland with the theme *Next generation higher education: Challenges, changes and opportunities*. I always look forward to travelling across 'the ditch'. In Auckland you can take a morning ferry ride to Waiheke Island and watch the magnificent coastline slip by, then spend the afternoon exploring a wonderful collection of Māori treasures in the museum. What could be better than Auckland harbourfront dining with a classic New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc?

As always I would love to hear your feedback on HERDSA CONNECT.

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From the President

Allan Goody

When I get the chance to attend conferences and talk with colleagues, I am engaged and learn so much but I am also frustrated, and disappointed. This also happens in one-on-one conversations with colleagues.

One such conversation was about the unfair and unethical situation in which my colleague finds themselves. They do outstanding work, yet it's never enough to satisfy management who seem to have a distorted sense of effective student learning and higher education in the broader sense.

I listened to several inspiring and engaging presentations at the conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL). These presentations gave me greater courage to be frank about my take on higher education and more broadly the troubled and chaotic world in which we live. These conversations, while mostly giving me hope, illustrated some of the challenges we face and the need to be radical and speak out, both individually and collectively to forge change for the better.

Philosopher Elizabeth Minnich in a keynote at the ISSoTL conference, drew on her work *The Evil of Banality: On the Life and Death Importance of Thinking*. Yes, Elizabeth studied under Hannah Arendt, the political scientist who wrote *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the*

Banality of Evil, hence the turn of phrase in the title. Elizabeth's explanation of the evil of banality gave clarity to my thoughts, that higher education has settled for the banal, that is, the ordinary, unimaginative and commonplace practiced on a wide scale. There is a lack of imaginative and radical approaches to higher education and teaching and learning. Yes, there might be innovation. Online and blended learning, graduate attributes and employability, and students-as-partners might be innovative, but is far from imaginative and radical, dare I say even new. It is tending toward the banal.

The real purpose of education has been lost, overrun by the banality of politicians and employers who see education as an economic activity rather than as both a societal and economic good. Newspaper headlines list the degrees that deliver the highest salaries, not those that contribute to discussion and understanding about our communities and society. Peer-reviewed research grants get vetoed by economic minded politicians who think that research in the humanities is not in the "national interest". And we all know which degrees produce the lowest paid jobs – those that focus more on humanity and caring.

Institutions of higher education buy into this, partly by financial expediency,

but mostly through the banality of a prescriptive approach to teaching and learning and curriculum design. There is little, if any, evidence of radical pedagogy and challenging of the status quo. For sure there are new pedagogies but these are generally constrained within these prescriptive structures. A radical approach might be to return to the on-campus student experience and the informal learning that occurs.

Employers say the universities are not producing job-ready graduates but surely they want more than discipline knowledge and the range of graduate attributes that all universities claim to develop. Or maybe not. Remember those employers and politicians are graduates of that same banality.

The change that we need in higher education is one that creates a better society. How might we do this? Start a conversation, be more collegial rather than individualistic, don't see management as the enemy, and be inclusive in all that we do. Encourage management to hear the stories of others and to understand the meaning in those stories as they relate not only to the work of academics but their wellbeing and sense of belonging to a learning culture, not just a business culture.

Change is a process. You don't need to be a leader to effect change. You only need to have a voice. We need to be more observant of what is happening in society, interrogate what we observe, engage in critical and courageous conversations with peers, students and the community and ask -- why is it so? What could it be? As Elizabeth said, few people change by being out-argued -- they just become resentful -- so we need to think things through. Thinking is a life and death challenge.

I am sure there will be many who will disagree with me but I am prepared to be challenged, and hey, what do I have to lose as I fade into the twilight of my career in higher education. And on that note, I wish everyone the peace and relaxation that the end of year brings and renewed vigour to challenge the banal in the new year.

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Economic analysis and policy-making

Rob Cuthbert

It is often hard to make sense of public policy for higher education. Australia and England often seem to be vying to be the first to introduce policies which most people in HE think of as damaging, much of it under the banner of marketisation. There are uncanny echoes between student loan accounting in England and Australia's Higher Education Contribution Scheme, both held by many to create 'fiscal illusions' which do not deliver the supposed benefits which are claimed. As the Adern government in New Zealand attempts to introduce three years free HE, critics claim that abolishing fees will impoverish the universities and thus restrict access to higher education.

Fifty years ago the Robbins Review examined alternatives for the future development of HE and articulated its purposes in broad and inspirational terms. Things changed. When the UK government introduced £9000 annual fees for undergraduate students it sealed the dominance of a narrowly economic perspective on HE. For HE policy in the UK and Australia, economics still frames the argument, achieving its unduly

privileged place with the connivance of academic economists who still see the solution as more and better metrics for the HE market. Gervas Huxley and Mike Peacey argued in *The Impact Blog* for a Total Equivalent Adjusted Contact Hours (TEACH) metric for higher education, supposedly to capture some of the dimensions of quality that truly matter and address the balance between teaching and research. A variation of TEACH, the Gross Teaching Quotient (GTQ), is being piloted for the TEF. In *Teaching Excellence Framework: Subject-level pilot specification* the Department for Education says:

The methods being piloted consider contact hours, class size, staff-student ratios, placements and field work to build a 'rounded picture' and that excellent teaching is linked with high student engagement. The department claims, "This fits with for example Gibb's commentary that, 'The number of class contact hours has very little to do with educational quality, independently of what happens in those hours, what the pedagogical model is, and what the consequences are for the

quantity and quality of independent study hours'".

This economic version of the academic world is 'nonsense on stilts'. Elevating economic analysis will not restore teaching to its rightful place in academic practice, and claiming the authority of Graham Gibbs for such a proposal is a crass non sequitur. Measurement and transparency are essential, but as Gibbs points out, no measure of teaching intensity has much to do with educational quality while it is independent of what happens in those hours.

In some other UK public services such as transport the limitations of economic analysis have been painfully exposed. In England, the National Audit Office (NAO) has issued a damning report on the higher education market. According to the report, if HE had been a financial product, the NAO would complain of mis-selling by universities. But the NAO's deeper criticism was of the idea that HE could be treated as a market at all, with the report listing the ways that the market and its regulation fell short of what was necessary and desirable.

Some markets make sense from an economic perspective, but educational markets don't make much sense at all. The inadequacies of economic analysis and pseudo-market choices became apparent as UK governments struggled with choices for railways and airports. HE is an even more complex business, yet the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act institutionalised the economic idea that markets and regulation are the answer to effective performance of the whole HE sector. 'Putting students at the heart of the system' turns out to mean a regulator with unprecedented powers - the Office for Students - whose Board has no representative of the National Union of Students and no teachers.

The economists have interpreted the world but the excessively economic framing of HE policy is nonsense, and it will sooner or later collapse under the weight of its own absurdity. We can only hope it won't take another 50 years.

Emeritus Professor of Higher Education Management, University of the West of England and Editor, SRHE News.

Around the branches



Across Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong our branches offer added value to HERDSA members. HERDSA Branch Chairs are shown above, from left to right: Karin Oerlemans (ACT), Anna Siu Fong Kwan (HK), Sara Hammer (QLD), Joy McEntee and Andrea Duff (SA), Tracy Douglas (TAS), Theda Thomas (VIC), Melissa Davis (WA).

ACT

Chair: Karin Oerlemans

The normally vibrant ACT branch has been a little quiet with branch members focused on the TATAL Teaching Philosophy workshops with international Canadian scholar Dieter Schönwetter. Look out for new activities in 2019.

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Hong Kong

Chair: Anna Siu Fong Kwan

Our on-line publication that will share our learning from the Redesigning Student Learning Experience in Higher Education (RSLEHE) project is almost ready. Planning for the second round, RSLEHE 2019, has started with emphasis on the student-teacher partnership. To hear student views on current innovations in higher education, some much discussed themes like flipped classroom, cross-culture, cross-disciplinary competence are encouraged.

To promote HERDSA to higher education colleagues from different parts of the world, Hong Kong Branch will organise a pre-conference workshop Flipping Your Class for Outcomes for the Lilly-Asia Conference 2019 in Hong Kong: www.lillyconferences-asia.com. HERDSA members working and visiting Hong Kong are most welcome to our activities. Please visit the website or contact Anna.

<http://herdsahk.edublogs.org/anna.kwan@outlook.com>

Queensland

Chair: Sara Hammer

Branch executive member, Christy Collis, was a guest of the Queensland Promoting Excellence Network (QPEN) at the QPEN Forum, University of Sunshine Coast and represented Qld HERDSA branch. The Branch assists QPEN by funding a keynote speaker. Christy and the QPEN leadership team also discussed ways in which the HERDSA QLD branch might provide a platform for continuing QPEN's important dissemination work of the OLT teaching and learning grant and award recipients. OLT funding ceases at the end of 2018.

We thank outgoing Chair Rebecca Sealey, and Kylie Readman who is going to pastures green in Western Australia, for their significant contribution to the life and activities of the Branch. Queensland HERDSA branch discussing expressions of interest for these positions.

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South Australia

Chairs: Joy McEntee and Andrea Duff

Thanks to the success of the HERDSA 2018 conference in Adelaide, the SA branch is welcoming new members to the committee. The merger between the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia has been called off however, all three Universities face major changes. A new strategic plan is being developed at the University of Adelaide, and industrial issues are afoot at Flinders and the University of South Australia. In this context, it is more important than ever that HERDSA SA provide

an avenue for intermural networking, so we are looking forward to an end-of-year event entitled Difficult Conversations: Nurturing Academic Identities in a Changing World.

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Tasmania

Chair: Tracy Douglas

HERDSA Tasmania member, Tracy Douglas was recently awarded a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching illustrating her significant contribution to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching at the University of Tasmania. Dr Jo-Anne Kelder presented a paper Building a whole-of-institution eco-system for SoTL capability and practice: a conceptual framework with co-authors Professor Justin Walls and Assoc Prof Andrea Carr at the ISSOTL conference in Norway. The framework offers a strategic, coordinated and integrated programs of activities that support, recognise and reward a culture of scholarship aligned to institutional quality assurance systems.

Tasmanian members were involved in organising and presenting at the major showcase for learning and teaching in Tasmania, the Teaching Matters Conference. Jo-Anne Kelder and Tracy Douglas facilitated HERDSA workshops on Developing a Teaching Philosophy to assist staff developing philosophies as part of their pathway to excellence.

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Victoria

Chair: Theda Thomas

Our Victorian branch joined with the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) to hold its annual HERDSA-ACEN Snapshots event on the 24th September. The event



provides an opportunity for Victorian members, who were unable to attend HERDSA or ACEN, to hear snapshots of presentations from the two events. Molly Dollinger, winner of the Taylor and Francis Prize for Best Paper by a New Researcher, opened the event, and it included eighteen other presentations and two roundtables. The event attracted one hundred and twenty participants. Our November Branch event explored the theme of academic identity.

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Western Australia

Chair: Melissa Davis

We held our annual HERDSA Rekindled conference with a twist, including nine presentations 'rekindled' from HERDSA and from the conferences: STARS, ASCILITE, ACEN, IUT and Blackboard TLC. We thank WAND, (the West Australian Network for Dissemination funded by the Office for Learning and Teaching) for sponsoring the event and Denise Chalmers for her opening address *Is there a future in professionalising higher education teaching?* Denise advocated for professionalising teaching in higher education to both recognise and ensure quality. She highlighted the current lack of well-understood professional criteria for teaching roles, in contrast to established criteria for research roles. She argued that many of the criteria for research could also be applied to teaching, such as participation in collegial and disciplinary networks and conferences, for which HERDSA plays an important role for teaching-focused academics.

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Luke Swiatek, Kathryn Sutherland, Eric Brogt

HERDSA New Zealand

HERDSA-NZ held the second annual Academic Development Symposium at Victoria University of Wellington. The symposium is an annual get-together of academic developers in New Zealand's universities, and more than thirty colleagues from seven universities attended. The symposium was generously sponsored by Ako Aotearoa, New Zealand's National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, and HERDSA-NZ. This year's theme was *Connecting and Staying Connected*, following from the desire of last year's participants to rekindle the community of practice we had until recently.

Each university centre presented an update and some hilarity ensued when a number of us found out the hard way that the PechaKucha format of 20 slides and 20 seconds per slide does require some practice.

An important panel discussion covered how academic developers connect with the Treaty of Waitangi to promote bicultural competence and confidence in staff and students. Panellists from three universities and Ako Aotearoa shared thoughts on why being Te Tiriti-led is important and how we might go about this more effectively. Panellists discussion emphasised

that biculturalism isn't about being or becoming Māori, but rather about undertaking our collective responsibility as Treaty partners. We need to ensure that our efforts are underpinned by sound research, conducted by and with Māori academics, and that we develop appropriate, targeted and accessible resources for use by all staff and students.

The afternoon's main feature was a World Café, where participants could pick any of five tables to discuss topics and could switch tables after 15-20 minutes of discussion. The topics were: connecting literature, research, theory and practice; internal and external connections; connecting with students; connecting with strategic directions nationwide; and connecting with new staff. Table leaders then summarised the discussions and questions that were raised. As in any good academic discussion, the World Café conversations generated more questions than they answered.

Participants appreciated the symposium, and most would like to continue the conversations so we will organise another next year.

Organisers: Erik Brogt, Kathryn Sutherland, Luk Swiatek



Science, technology, maths and engineering = STEM

Sally Male

The Australian Government has commissioned the Australian Academy of Science, supported by the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering, to develop a Women in STEM Decadal Plan. This will be used to inform the National Strategy to increase women's participation in STEM education and work. I would like to highlight some of the evidence-based recommendations in our submission.

Women continue to be severely under-represented in non-traditional areas, such as engineering and computer science. So women in non-traditional areas should be reinstated as an equity group for university funding purposes. We need appropriate and fair measures of potential; relative to opportunity rather than accumulated record; for career progression and promotion, and for scholarship selection processes in STEM. Student evaluations of teaching and peer assessments of learning activities have their limitations. Gender bias has been found in student evaluations of teaching (see Anne Boring's research). Role Congruity Theory, proposed by Alice Eagly, explains that people under-rate those who do not align with stereotypes for their roles. This is consistent with the experience of women in engineering who commonly find their technical competence doubted when they join a new team, and with engineering student teams, as observed by Karen Tonso.

Student comments and ratings are relevant for informing improvements to teaching, and providing feedback to students. However using student reviews of teaching in STEM directly as measures of teachers' performance should be avoided. Similarly, educators who wish to use peer ratings to allocate marks should be cautious. Students should at least be taught about cognitive bias before they submit reviews.



Kiata Rundle (centre) with student panel members at the HERDSA conference

STUDENT VIEW

Sandra Leathwick caught up with *PhD student Kiata Rundle* following the HERDSA Conference. Sandra asked Kiata about her experience as a student.

Make it interesting. That is what I will tell any academic who asks me about teaching. That's when I put the most effort in. Another really important thing is to take more time to teach students how to write assignments and to use referencing correctly.

The best part of my undergraduate study was being asked by the unit coordinator for a copy of an assignment I had written because it was so good, she wanted to use it as an exemplar for other students. Getting accepted into Masterclass also helped give me a push. Taking some time off after failing a couple of units initially gave me a bit of perspective.

The biggest barrier to being a student has always been money. Centrelink makes it hard when your payment doesn't even cover your share of the rent. Textbooks cost what feels like a million dollars. It's hard enough as a student, let alone having to fork out several hundred dollars a semester on textbooks you hardly use. It's even worse when you know that the content will be out of date the moment you buy it. I don't understand why there isn't a greater emphasis on the latest research.

One of the biggest drivers for me was always my friends. One of the other drivers for me is ambition, I've never wanted to spend my life working a checkout or in hospitality. Uni gave me the opportunity to do more and to be better. The most important enabler, by far, is my partner, he has been my biggest supporter. He took time off from his own studies to work full-time to support me while I completed my honours. The other most important enablers include my supervisors.

Kiata Rundle is a PhD candidate at Murdoch University and Sandra Leathwick is a PhD student at the University of Queensland and an academic at the Australian Catholic University.



HERDSA SIG members at the conference

HERDSA Special Interest Groups

HERDSA Special Interest Groups (SIG) offer members and non-members a network of like-minded colleagues with whom you can talk about shared research interests as well as potentially undertake some collaborative research. Three HERDSA SIGS are active. In this issue we highlight the Academic Development Special Interest Group.

Academic Development Special Interest Group

The Academic Development SIG was formed early in 2018 and was recognised by the HERDSA Executive in July. The SIG aims to provide a platform for colleagues who are engaged in staff and educational development, teaching and learning support, and/or who do research in those areas. As many institutions only employ a few educational developers, we wish to form a community of practice and mutual support.

The SIG aims to:

- Share knowledge, resources, skills, and practices in academic development / continuing professional development
- Contribute to theory building in academic development
- Provide a community of practice and critical friends / sounding boards
- Explore potential (collaborative) research projects
- Discuss roles / responsibilities of (strategic) academic development in a changing university
- Discuss strategies for remaining a collaborative community in an

environment where our institutions are increasingly in competition

- Discuss strategies to show relevance / value-add of academic development within the corporate, neoliberal university management environment
- Maintain links with other professional bodies in academic development, such as POD in North America and SEDA in the United Kingdom)

In addition, we hope to support SIG members who wish to run local events for educational developers. The SIG is currently involved in helping organise the second Academic Development symposium for colleagues in New Zealand, which will be held in Wellington on October 25, followed by a writing retreat on October 26.

Currently, we have two online communities, on Facebook and on LinkedIn. You can find us as the HERDSA Academic Development Special Interest Group on facebook and linkedin. We are also setting up a mailing list.

The SIG Committee is Erik Brogt (Chair), University of Canterbury; Margaret Jollands, RMIT University; Julie Timmermans, University of Otago, and Maxine Mitchell, University of the Sunshine Coast.

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Starting a new SIG contact
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HERDSA

The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia is a scholarly society for people committed to the advancement of higher and tertiary education.

HERDSA promotes the development of higher education policy, practice and the study of teaching and learning.

HERDSA encourages and disseminates research on teaching and learning and higher education development. It also works to build strong academic communities.

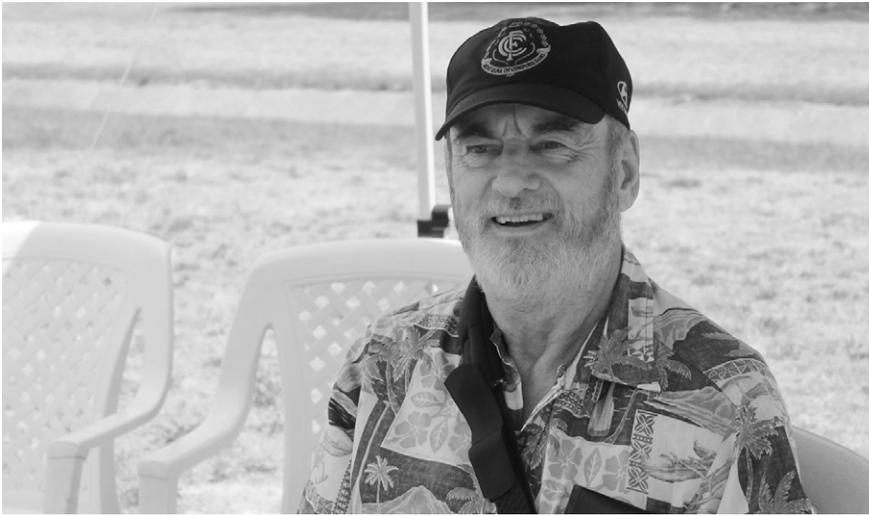
www.herdsa.org.au

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Modules are self-paced, online modules designed to commence new scholars, and those leading new scholars, on their SoTL journey. The modules include videos of prominent Australian and New Zealand HERDSA members.

HERDSA Branches and Special Interest Groups

Funds are available for local networking activities. To apply for funding such as colloquia, fora, post-conference presentations, network meetings, or speakers contact the HERDSA President or your local branch contact.



Who's who in HERDSA

Robert Kennelly

My main areas of research are collaborative reflective practice for teaching and learning, and the development of discipline skills in second language students. I am mainly retired though hold a position of Adjunct at Canberra University and continue to lead groups of collaborative reflective teachers with a program called Talking about Teaching and Learning (TATAL)

I have been with HERDSA or its earlier administrative equivalent since 1990. My first role was as the coordinator of the National Gathering of University Staff Developers which met six times in the 1990s. I became a Pioneer HERDSA Fellow in Christchurch in 2003; I joined the HERDSA Executive in 2006 on the Fellowship Committee and remained on it until 2012. With Jackie Walkington I reconvened the Canberra branch of HERDSA in 2007.

The first TATAL was started by Coralie McCormack and myself in 2008, with support from HERDSA and an excellence in teaching grant. In 2010 that TATAL group published a HERDSA guide Telling stories to enhance teaching and learning. In 2011 Coralie and I commenced our first HERDSA Conference TATAL and these are now a fixture at the HERDSA Conference. The

next HERDSA Conference TATAL in Auckland will be number nine.

HERDSA membership is important.

Now I am retired I spend very little time in an actual workplace so the annual conference is a great way to stay in touch and keep abreast of new things on the horizon. Also just to catch up with old mates.

My proudest moment was being made a HERDSA Life Member in 2013. I had been working at UWA, having taken my wife, Moya, home for the year to celebrate her 60th. HERDSA, through then President Shelda Debowski, provided \$1000 for the airfare to the Auckland conference. I already had my fare so I asked Moya to come. At the HERDSA dinner I was presented with my Life membership and then three TATALers from 2009 and 2011 became HERDSA fellows.

My passions include teaching and learning, travel, Grandkids (seven) and athletics -- race walking and throwing. The picture shows me officiating at a Shotput competition on account of the fact that I have a new shoulder.

I don't blog or tweet but I do write emails about politics, climate change and Aussie Rules football. I am reading

Absolute Power by Paul Collins: The history and politics of the papacy over the last 220 years... a lesson in non-distributed leadership.

The things that annoy me include Australian politicians, University CEOs, once referred to as Vice Chancellors. Their general abandonment of the teaching and learning space and specifically their inability to understand that student smiley sheets are not a measure of teaching or learning.

I want to continue to focus on enhancing the opportunities for academics to reflect on their teaching and learning by continuing to expand TATAL. In particular a group of us (Coralie McCormack, Gesa Ruge, Nicole Gareau-Wilson, Dieter Schönwetter and I) are researching the contemporary value of Teaching Philosophy Statements. We hope to present our findings at the HERDSA conference in Auckland 2019.

Things I love doing include long distance walking with a pack. I completed the Camino de Santiago trail at 834ks and the Hume and Hovel track at 434ks. I am quite pleased at completing these long distance walks with Moya. Another thing I enjoy is calling horse races

The qualities I admire in others are integrity and humour. If I could have dinner with two well-known people I would choose Jacinda Adern, mother and NZ prime minister; and John Gilmour, survivor of the Burma Railway and one of the world's greatest veteran long distance runners. Unfortunately he died in early August.

If I could turn back time I would change the meeting of Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull in 2007 on climate change; it would have been a success and we (and the world) would be in a much better place now.

The next HERDSA TATAL will be run at the HERDSA conference in Auckland.

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The HERDSA Fellowship

Five new HERDSA Fellows were granted their Fellowships at the HERDSA conference. We welcome Kathie Ardejewski, Stuart Schonell, Raj Shekhawat, Kate Thomson, and Geoff Treloar to the Fellowship community. Our new Fellows have completed an in-depth reflection on philosophy and practice over an extended period leading to the development of a significant teaching portfolio.

Dr Raj Shekhawat is a Senior Lecturer in the Center for Learning and Teaching (CfLAT) at the Auckland University of Technology. Here he reflects on the process.

When I attended my very first HERDSA conference in 2016 at Freemantle, little did I know that this conference would transform me personally and professionally. I was amazed to connect with many academics who passionately cared about higher education teaching and learning through TATAL and

HERDSA. This resulted in me embarking on the reflective journey of the HERDSA fellowship along with Prof Chris Tisdell as my mentor from the UNSW. We were working in different time zones and countries and this sparked us to use innovation and technology to facilitate our Discussions, Archiving them, Reflection and Preparing for the next step. From this we developed an E-mentoring model (DARP) which is currently under review for publication. I was awarded the fellowship during HERDSA 2018 conference and

it was lovely to share that special moment with my mentor and TATAL community in the audience.

A lot has happened to me since my very first encounter with HERDSA in 2016. I am now actively participating in the HERDSA New Zealand branch and on the organising committee for the 2019 HERDSA conference in Auckland. I have also joined the HERDSA central conference organizing committee.

The TATAL project has been, and still is, a significant one for me as a Fellow. I have been co-facilitating TATAL since 2017 and a participant of the 2016 TATAL online group. This has led to my work as an Officer of HERDSA for the TATAL Professional Development portfolio and to my joining Robert Kennelly as co-convenor of TATAL 2019. My grape vine says that 2019 TATAL will be the bestest... shhhh keep it confidential as we have only 30 spots.

My engagement with HERDSA and the Fellowship journey has given me a new direction professionally. In September 2018, I started my new job as Senior lecturer at AUT, Center for Learning and Teaching (CfLAT). And of course, as a Fellow, I take on the rewarding role of mentoring HERDSA associate fellows on their Fellowship journey. I can't thank HERDSA enough for the amazing work and transformation the organisation has been facilitating, both in the academic community globally, and in my life personally.

The HERDSA Fellowship Scheme

- Do you want to have your education practice recognised?
- Do you want to improve the quality of your education practice?
- Do you want to improve the quality of student learning?
- Join the HERDSA Fellowship Community.

The HERDSA Fellowship Scheme offers HERDSA members an

opportunity to be part of a vibrant community of practitioners and researchers interested in improving teaching and learning in tertiary education.

The Fellowship Scheme is for HERDSA members who are academics or leaders and have made a significant personal commitment to the improvement of teaching and learning in a tertiary education context. Fellows may come from a range of positions including:

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The Fellowship Scheme provides opportunities for personal and professional development; collegiality and collaboration; and recognition of achievements for career advancement.

Information at the website: www.herdsa.org.au



Marcia Devlin

Many HERDSA CONNECT readers will have heard about the ‘block model’ of teaching being implemented in higher education at Victoria University from this year. First year students study one unit at a time – sequentially rather than consecutively – intensively over a four week ‘block’ of time. Students are only required on campus three days a week, with supplementary materials available online and wrap around support and services available all week. Classes are small (capped at 30 students) and teaching strategies purposefully encourage interaction with peers and the teacher and deep exploration of concepts. All assessment is completed within the four-week block, that is, there is no subsequent exam period. We are now rolling this method out to second year and beyond.

Compared to traditional mode, every measure of learning and quality has improved through the introduction of this mode of teaching and this is evidenced in anecdotal, observational and quantitative data. Attendance at class is up, as is student engagement in their learning. Peer contact and connection within a unit is higher. The proportion of students who complete and submit all assessment tasks is higher. Relationships between teachers and students are closer. Academic and pastoral support for individual students have improved. Fail rates have halved

and grade distributions have shifted upwards overall, including while using identical assessment tasks to those used in previous years. Ethics clearance is in place for a series of formal studies to be undertaken to test these observations and to publish the results in peer reviewed journals.

One of the many interesting aspects of the outcomes of the block model in the policy and funding context in Australia is that it appears to have reduced attrition. It’s hard to tell though.

According to its strategic plan, Victoria University is a ‘University of Opportunity and Success’. Unlike some, it is not an exclusive university that prides itself on such exclusivity. It is an inclusive university that prides itself on welcoming any student from any background and doing all it can to help every student succeed. The student body has high rates of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, a higher proportion of mature age than school leaver students (who are more likely to have employment and family responsibilities) and, based in the western suburbs of Melbourne, very high cultural and language diversity.

Because much national higher education research and policy work in Australia has often been underpinned

by an unexamined assumption that students are ‘traditional’, that is, young, unencumbered, school leavers, living at home or on campus at parents’ expense, and more likely than not to be studying full time and to complete their program of study in one time period in the minimum time, national mechanisms for measuring attrition are similarly underpinned. Retention is currently measured by annually counting commencing students at census date in sequential years while subtracting those who have completed their program of study.

Readers who work in universities with student bodies similar to those of Victoria University will be familiar with the phenomenon of these students dipping in and out of study as they manage the realities of their financial situations, complex lives, family and caring responsibilities and competing priorities. It is often not possible, nor desirable personally, for these students to study full time, nor to complete their program in a single time period or within the minimum completion time.

However, despite the growing number and proportion of students in the Australian higher education sector who are unlikely to follow the typical traditional program completion trajectory, official measures of attrition – widely believed to be part of the proposed performance funding calculations currently being prepared by the Australian government – continue to make erroneous assumptions about student journeys.

When it comes to the block model at Victoria University, we have four census dates in what other universities would typically call a semester – that is, one census date every four weeks, each occurring a week after the start of each block. The current method of measuring retention on an annual basis is nonsensical in this context. But we’ve yet to figure out how to accurately and sensibly measure retention in our context. Given the signs are that retention has improved, this is a really good problem to have.

Marcia Devlin is Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Senior Vice President and Professor of Learning Enhancement at Victoria University, Australia.



Wordcraft Helen Sword

Writing expert Professor Helen Sword answers readers' questions on academic writing, productivity and wordcraft.

What principles and techniques can help us communicate effectively across disciplines and share our research with the world?

Stylish academic writers employ a wide array of techniques – from eye-catching titles to graceful citation practices – to communicate effectively with readers both within and beyond their disciplines. (If the word *stylish* doesn't float your boat, feel free to replace it throughout this column with *engaging* or *elegant* or even just *good*). Stylish writing can take many forms but nearly always exemplifies the following principles:

Tell a story. Stylish academic writers engage their readers by telling stories about real people facing real challenges. And in higher education research, there are so many stories to tell! For help in framing your narrative, start by calling on the “six honest serving men” of Rudyard Kipling's eponymous poem: “Their names are What and Why and When / And How and Where and Who.”

Be concrete. Stylish academic writers anchor abstract concepts in the material world by using plenty of examples, anecdotes, and case studies. Sometimes just a well-placed metaphor will do.

However, keep in mind that figurative language can jump the fence like a frisky colt if you don't keep your hands firmly on the reins. When we write about *navigating new conceptual territory* or *building a theoretical framework*, we are helping our readers make sense of complex ideas. But as soon as we start *navigating conceptual frameworks* – mixing a metaphor of exploration with a metaphor of construction – it's a sign that our horse has well and truly bolted.

Write like a human being. Whether or not they choose to use first-person pronouns, stylish academic writers gain their readers' confidence and earn their trust by cultivating an authoritative yet conversational voice. Try reading a few paragraphs of your academic prose out loud to yourself or to a friend. Do your sentences sound as though they were produced by a cyborg living on Mars? (“Full participation, however, stands in contrast to only one aspect of the concept of peripherality as we see it: It places the emphasis on what partial participation is not, or not yet.” Huh?) Or can you hear a real person speaking?

Hone your craft. Well-crafted prose is an ethical imperative. Stylish academic writers don't just dump their words on the page and walk away. They work hard on their writing so that their readers won't have to.

Professor Helen Sword (www.helensword.com) is a scholar, poet and prize-winning teacher who has published widely on academic writing and writers. Her recent books include *Stylish Academic Writing* and *Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write*.

Do you have a burning question about academic writing that you would like to see answered in this column? Send it to Helen Sword (h.sword@auckland.ac.nz) with the subject line 'Wordcraft'.

HERDSA member publishes book on early career academics

Well-known HERDSA New Zealand identity Kathryn Sutherland has published a new book which is receiving good reviews.

What does it mean to be starting an academic career in the twenty first century? What challenges and prospects are new academics facing and how are they dealing with these? Kathryn poses and provides answers to these questions.

The book provides support in key areas of the academic life, in particular the teaching, research, and service preferences and activities of early career academics; work-life balance and professional development. The experiences of Māori academics and findings from the Changing Academic Profession survey in 19 other countries are important aspects of the book.

Suggestions are made, and links to freely available online resources are provided, for improving socialisation at the individual, departmental, institutional, and national levels.

The book is available online at: <http://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319618296>. Individual chapters may be downloaded.



Program participants celebrate success with presenters



International Research Centre, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

Postcard from China

Susan Bolt

Recently the Institute of Leadership and Education Advanced Development (ILEAD) at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), which is 'an independent Chinese university accredited by the University of Liverpool for the delivery of Liverpool awards at both undergraduate and postgraduate level' (AQSD, UoL, 2018) invited me and a colleague to deliver a Develop the Developers Program for English speaking early career educational developers.

As such a programme did not exist, we designed it based on our knowledge, understanding and experience as educational developers. We covered three major themes over three days: the role and purpose of educational development; developing teaching and enhancing practice; and ongoing development, impact and critical reflection. We included a pre-workshop survey to identify participants' levels of experience and needs. With only five responses to the survey, alarm bells rang. As English language competency was an issue, a translator asked us to send her the slides a week before the event.

On arrival we were warmly greeted by the ILEAD team, hosted to a Chinese banquet and accommodated in the

International Academic Exchange and Collaboration Centre, which was a contemporary, comfortable and classy conference centre on XJTLU's South Campus in the Education and Innovation District in Suzhou. The following day we met with the ILEAD team which was located in the International Research centre, also on the South Campus.

In the opening session of Day 1 we introduced ourselves and asked participants to introduce themselves; name, university, role, expectations. Many of the participants did not speak English and it was necessary to work through a translator. A minority had educational development related roles. Many were professors, senior leaders of academic and professional areas, and discipline-based teachers. Two of the most asked questions were – what is educational development and what are the qualifications? Not quite the situation we were expecting. We debated whether or not our slides and interactive facilitation would be appropriate. Too late now, one glance at the screen and we could see everything had been translated. Slides which were once uncluttered were now dense with text in two languages. The registration list indicated there were twenty-seven participants. We observed

there were at least six additional people in the room who were observers, evaluators, students, translators, administrators and film crew.

As we delivered the workshops we were overwhelmed with the high level of engagement of the participants, deep interest in learning and teaching, and genuine rapport and sense of comradeship that developed between the participants, the translators, observers and the presenters. We discovered we had a lot in common with Chinese educators and gained a deeper understanding of their thirst for knowledge and passion for learning and teaching in higher education in China. We met students who were observers, translators or volunteers. We had the pleasure of being escorted by a student volunteer to the old township of Suzhou and were impressed with her high level of initiative and care in looking after us in a context in which we spoke no Chinese. We were delighted to see how students played such active integral roles in supporting this initiative.

As we worked with the translators and support staff we gained an appreciation of the long hours they worked and their commitment to their jobs. As we spoke to senior leaders we gained an understanding of driving forces, directions and vision for development of higher education in regional and global contexts. Indeed it was a two-way experience of developing the developers.



Postcard from Malaysia

Beena Giridharan

As I walk across campus, I reflect on the journey Curtin University, Malaysia, has taken from its establishment in 1999 to 2018, into a university campus, poised to celebrate its 20th anniversary in Jan 2019. This is a fantastic milestone for any educational institution to commemorate, celebrate, and realign its vision to being a unique campus offering distinctive higher education experiences to students from around the world.

Curtin University of Technology, Sarawak (as it was originally known) has transformed from a small regional campus serving around 200 students at the interim Riam Road campus in 1999, into one of the largest offshore Australian campuses, and the highest ranked university in the state of Sarawak. The purpose-built campus inaugurated in 2002, has continued to build from strength to strength. From 400+ students in 2000, the campus now hosts about 4000 students in various foundation, undergraduate and post grad programs, in Engineering & Science, Business and Humanities.

To match the growth in programs, the campus has maintained growth over the years, not just in programs or students but also in infrastructure and facilities,

and the range of services it provides.

As the global hub in Asia for Curtin University, the Miri campus offers a unique learning experience to students. For one, we are located in the heart of Borneo, with access to the rainforests, and the spectacular archaeological caves in Niah which has recently been established to have had human pre-history of about 65,000 years, exceeding the previously estimated 45,000 years.

The Niah caves is one of the significant field sites for our Bachelor of Applied Geology students, who conduct geological field surveys in the region, taking advantage of the natural geographical formations to advance their disciplinary knowledge. I recall my own visits to the Niah caves and being told by my local colleagues, "Make sure you carry a flashlight, wear proper walking shoes, and don't hold the wooden handrails".

To my consternation I discovered what they meant, when I had to grip guano laden rails to prevent falling on the slippery boardwalks. The caves extend down into cavernous dark depths for quite a while before one can see any daylight. Sometimes, you come across bird nest collectors who shimmy up

precarious poles, the height of multiple storey buildings, to collect the precious Swiftlet birds nests which are touted as a panacea in these parts; In recent times some restrictions have been placed on these activities to prevent the decimation of the species. The painted caves are a real treat, as they feature reddish hued iron age paintings which are now quite faded, depicting scenes of boat journeys of the dead into afterlife. Nearby there are boat shaped coffins.

I have not yet begun to discuss the cultures and history of the land of the hornbills – Sarawak. Just this week, I had the privilege of welcoming guests to an enthralling or rather mouthwatering food festival organized by the students completing a service learning unit at the campus. Malaysia is known to be a food haven, nonetheless, being home to so many ethnic groups in Sarawak, we get to enjoy the delicacies that are unique to the region such as manuk pansuh, which is a chicken dish cooked in bamboo stems, and midin, which is a local fern that grows in natural environments. The tips of midin are stir fried in rice wine and make for a crunchy delicious accompaniment to steamed rice.

Of course I would be punished by fellow Sarawakians if I tried to keep the world acclaimed Sarawak laksa, a secret. The late Antony Bourdain, in his television series, Parts Unknown, had introduced Sarawak laksa to the world. It is a dish comprising noodles, prawns, and vegetables all cooked in a fragrant sauce that doubles up as soup. It is guaranteed to make any food lover come back for seconds.

I guess my list wouldn't be complete without the famed Sarawak layer cakes. These are traditional cakes with exceptional carpet like patterns that are baked painstakingly, layer by layer, and taste as good as they appear.

I welcome academics and potential students to our beautiful Sarawak campus through conferences or mobility programs to experience a truly outstanding higher education experience.

Curtin University, Malaysia at sunset Photo courtesy Curtin University, Malaysia
The Niah caves Photos courtesy Curtin University, Malaysia



IT in higher education A retrospective

Roger Atkinson

The most common use of the term ‘retrospective’, at least in my mind, is as a descriptor for a collection selected from an artist’s lifetime work. Having just recently visited our Art Gallery of WA to view Sidney Nolan’s entire Ned Kelly series (on tour from the Australian National Gallery), my enthusiasm for a ‘retrospective’ has been rekindled. Of course the Kelly series does not represent the whole of Nolan’s lifetime work; it is merely a great pinnacle in his lifetime journey. Nevertheless I’ll take some liberties and use ‘retrospective’ for that exhibition, and also for this much humbler, less dramatic musing. Retrospective is a great word, seemingly related to ‘introspective’, to ‘perspective’, and to ‘retro’, for which one interpretation is as a code word for a revival of a style that existed a generation or two ago. So ‘intro’, ‘per’ and ‘retro’ are my ‘spectives’ and organisers for this musing which concludes, or signs off, or logs out, from a series I commenced fourteen years ago in 2004 after an invitation from the late Roger Landbeck. Fourteen years? A long time, considering that Nolan dashed off the Kelly paintings in just two years, 1946-47; though unlike me, he was not in retirement, as I was from mid-2001).

To begin with the ‘introspective’ part. It’s not a matter of ‘exhibiting’ all thirty-five of my IT in higher education columns, it’s more like a looking inwards, for the personal and the wider, extrinsic reasons why the writing was motivated. On the personal reasons, I have a long-standing admiration for Richard Winter’s (1996) eloquent summary of purpose:

...writing up a report is an act of learning and in this sense, we write for ourselves so that, when we read what we have written, we find out what, in the end, we have learned.

Looking back through the thirty-four previous columns, I’m very aware that much of the purpose could be characterised as writing for myself. The first column, in *HERDSA News* 26(3), is illustrative. Its recurring theme of *marginal costs approaching zero*, applied to the core foundations of the IT revolution, *information storage*, *digital network transport*, and *digital search processes*, was a ‘writing up’ of my experiences, and from that I learnt more. Whilst ‘writing up’ is a very familiar component of learning, from early primary school to PhD thesis submission and beyond, the context for Richard Winter’s quotation was ‘investigating professional experience’. In particular,

Winter’s phrase (1996), ‘the process of attempting to have new thoughts about familiar experiences’, aptly matched what I sought to do.

After the first column in 2004, many other columns similarly embodied much learning by ‘writing up’. Often my ‘learning journey’ was documented with lengthy reference lists, as in *HERDSA News* 32(3), the ‘Tier Review’ column, which had 1822 words in the body text, and 451 words in the list of 28 references, nearly all including a URL. This learning extended widely beyond textbook-like expositions of technologies, for a reason emphasised in 32(3):

... I have to acknowledge that much of what is happening in educational technology *per se* is not especially interesting. Sometimes, for me at least, there is too much hype about topics like Gen Y, digital natives, killer applications, *iThis* and *eThat*, and so on. What is often more interesting is how various people react to, accommodate, adopt or employ educational technologies (or fail to properly ..., as the case may be).

However, writing for myself was always complemented by an extrinsic purpose: communicating knowledge and insights that may be helpful to others, and perhaps at least a little influential in contemporary discourses relating to higher education and to academic research. The examples found in *The Conversation*, which proclaims ‘Academic rigour’ and ‘journalistic flair’, set a standard I admire. Among the contemporary issues represented in my IT columns, perhaps the most notable was the ill-fated attempt by the Australian Research Council to impose its ‘Four tiers’ method of valuing research work. In *HERDSA News* and other avenues, mainly AJET Editorials, I sought to draw attention to the silliness of attempting to assess the value of research work through some perception of the prestige of the ‘outlet’ (journal) in which it was published. I hoped to have my phrases ‘Blood, sweat and four tiers’, and ‘Tier review process’ widely repeated.

Among numerous other contemporary issues, some columns sought to accord greater attention to Australian

innovations, in educational technology and innovative pedagogies, often in the context of links with events outside the realm of research into higher education. In this genre, 'Free Wi-Fi everywhere!', *HERDSA News* 37(3) linked an Australian hitech innovation, Wi-Fi, to campus-wide free Wi-Fi now provided at all Australian universities, and to Europe's 2015 summer and autumn refugee crisis, concluding with a bold new pro-refugee message (ignored), 'Come to the country where Wi-Fi was invented! Tech-savvy youth especially welcome. University and technical college scholarships available. Tap HERE to apply for Australia!'. Also in this genre, *HERDSA News* 37(1) asked the question, 'Can we learn anything from an edtech journal archive?', offering new thoughts about three notable Australian and New Zealand edtech innovations. A plea about the need for a broader appreciation of what constituted an innovation appeared in 'University educators are innovators too!', *HERDSA News* 38(2), expressing my resentment (and resentment from many others) towards the Australian Government's then newly hatched *National Innovation and Science Agenda*.

Turning to the 'perspectives' part, the IT perspective was never a constant; it changed over my years, often quite rapidly, as may be illustrated by reference to two of my favourites four interpretive frameworks (which some call 'theories'), namely Rogers' *Diffusion of innovations*, and TPCK (technological, pedagogical and content knowledge). Using the Rogers framework, in earlier times, late 1980s to mid 1990s, attention centred on the first two of his five categories of adopters, *innovators* and *early adopters*, whilst present day attention is more concerned with attending to the *laggards*, and the refining of practices amongst the *early majority* and the *late majority*. Expressed in another way, earlier practices reflected searches for ways to make an innovation work, and to disseminate it, whilst current practices reflect ways to refine and improve systems in which almost everyone is an adopter. Reflecting upon the TPCK framework, I feel that over the years the 'primacies' have become more

balanced, firstly with more importance being accorded to *technological*, then more recently, much more importance being accorded to *pedagogical* knowledge.

The IT perspective in these columns also sought to represent a diversity of topics, though academic publishing became well-represented, in response to the very great impact that IT advances have had upon academic journals, books and communications. However, research methods have been included, as in 'Can we trust web-based surveys?', *HERDSA News*, 29(3); and in my whimsical comment on methods for finding research time, 'Burning the midnight oil', *HERDSA News*, 35(1). Of the many topics in publishing, open access was always a favourite, and an inspiration, including, for example, 'Open educational resources', *HERDSA News* 39(1); 'Textbooks free and online!' in 37(2); 'E-theses: Will online change the thesis tradition?' in 31(1); and the problem of 'open access article publishing charges enabling a dark side?' in 35(3). As an aside, my writing for this 'retrospective' is being done during *Open Access Week*, a decade old international series.

Finally, I need to explain why I characterised the 'retro' part as 'a code word for a revival of a style that existed a generation or two ago'. Could my style of viewing IT in higher education become 'retro', that is, not being kept properly representative of the very diverse range of contemporary IT topics? Well, that is a risk, but the main reason for moving on from IT is to engage more intensively with new fields. Still on a learning journey (seventy-five next month), I want to reserve more time for *Issues in Educational Research* (IIER) journal matters, where my attention now centres on inclusivity towards non-Western contexts and ESL authors in educational research journal publishing. In this quite different field, the role of technology is relatively minor as a research topic (though truly vital as tools and infrastructure). As to the learning journey, IIER is a generalist journal, encompassing a wide range of educational research topics, making it very suitable for one with a predilection

for never-ending, lifelong learning journeys.

With thanks for the gently persuasive reminders provided by the late Roger Landbeck and thereafter by Maureen Bell, I'll sign off Cheers, Roger.

Roger Atkinson retired from Murdoch University in 2001. His current activities include honorary work on the journal *Issues in Educational Research*. Website: <http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/>

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Links

See <http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/pubs/herdsa-news/41-1.html> for this article in HTML, including links to numerous references for this topic. See <http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/pubs/herdsa-news/> for a list of all *IT in higher education* columns.

HERDSA PUBLICATIONS

Higher Education Research & Development journal

HERDSA's refereed journal, published by Taylor & Francis, is of high international standing. Articles on the theory and practice of higher education.

HERDSA Review of Higher Education (free)

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HERDSA CONNECT (free)

HERDSA's magazine formerly HERDSA NEWS. Topical issues, activities, programs and action research.

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From the Herd Editorial Desk

Craig Whitsed and Wendy Green

Twitter, according to some news sources, is experiencing a decline in new subscribers to the service. Well, it's a good thing that our newest member of the Higher Education Research and Development journal (HERD) editorial team is an expert across multiple social media platforms. Stuart Hughes has joined the team as our co-Editor for social media. Stuart's role is specifically to grow our social media presence. If you are on twitter you will have seen how active he already is. Stuart is also looking for other ways to promote articles in the journal, so if you have some ideas please contact him, or better yet send him a tweet.

As an editorial team, one of our goals is to ensure HERD's position as a truly international journal in a dynamic and rapidly expanding higher education research community. Increasing our social media presence is one of our strategies. Another is to increase new readers' access to the journal. Taylor and Francis will soon provide free access to one article per issue for a finite period. At the same time, we are noticing an increase in the number of articles, which can be published as Open Access. Both of these developments mean that HERD can be read more widely in emerging regions of higher education research.

In another move towards increasing our relevance in our Asia-Pacific region and globally, we have recruited new

members to the Editorial Advisory Board. The members provide expertise in current and emerging fields of inquiry in higher education from a broad range of geo-political contexts. As one member wrote, "HERD is indeed a world-class research journal, a reference publication on research and innovation in HE with a substantial impact on our profession as well as HE leadership and HE policymaking". We are working hard to ensure that it remains thus.

In order to track the impact of the journal, we are also using 'altmetrics' which captures quantitative data such as social media interest in an article and journal, to complement traditional, citation-based metrics. In the contemporary university environment 'altmetrics' are a significant indicator of impact. With our new Social Media co-Editor we aim to increase the number of downloads for the articles we publish and increase the number of submissions we receive.

Finally, our Associate Editors and Reviewers play such an important role in ensuring the quality and standing of HERD. We would like to express our gratitude to the Associate Editors and Reviewers leaving us and to those joining us. Without your dedication and passion HERD could not be the journal it has become.

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ESSENTIAL READING

Susan Blackley is a co-Editor of the HERD journal. Her choice for our Essential Reading column is by Sarah O'Shea & Janine Delahunty: *Getting through the day and still having a smile on my face! How do students define success in the university learning environment?* HERD (2018) 37:5.

As Director, Student Engagement at Curtin University, I am deeply engaged in issues related to student transition, measures of success, retention and satisfaction. This paper is particularly relevant as educators struggle to engage students in education, rather than merely accreditation; and as many institutions take a 'customer' approach to the student experience.

O'Shea and Delahunty explore how understandings of success are framed in relation to a group of students in the latter stages of their degree and who were first-in-family to attend university. Given that for these students, even progressing to the latter stages of their degree actually indicated 'success' of some kind, it was interesting that a significant number of respondents were unsure or did not identify themselves as being successful. Some revealed that they *supposed* they were successful because they hadn't failed a subject. The themes that emerged: success as a form of validation; success as defying the odds; embodied and emotional success; and what success is not.

O'Shea and Delahunty note that without constructive or useful feedback from their lecturers many students were uncertain as to their degree of success. This has implications for our teaching staff providing formative assessment and informative feedback.



Meanderings

Robert Cannon

Academic publishing continues to attract attention in the press and, somewhat incestuously, in academic publications as well. For example, a study reported in *The Times*, 9 June 1980, found a strong relationship between the incomprehensibility of articles and the prestige of journals. The most recent academic publishing eruption however, has been over the ‘grievance studies’ hoax, a series of bogus journal article submissions that resulted in seven accepted papers and four publications. The hoaxers describe the field of ‘grievance studies’ as placing social grievance ahead of objective truth.

Accounts of the hoax range across the spectrum of gleeful ridicule of academic practices to thoughtful analysis of the underlying publishing issues in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (3 October, 2018). *The New York Times* (6 October, 2018) suggests that scholarship on questions of how gender, race or bias is expressed in culture has been driven into small sub-specialisations with fewer quality safeguards. In the *New Statesman America* (17 October 2018), it is observed, “Hopefully, when emotions are running less high, the academics who were duped will be ready to start asking themselves difficult questions”.

If you have a few minutes, google ‘academic hoaxes’ for accounts of

how hoaxes were perpetrated. Author ‘Neuroskeptic’ in *Predatory Journals Hit by Star Wars Sting* (22 July 2017) describes how purportedly ‘scientific’ journals accepted his Star Wars-themed paper that was an absurd mess of factual errors, plagiarism and movie quotes. For transparency, Neuroskeptic even admitted that text was ‘Rogeted’ from Wikipedia! This reference to Roget’s Thesaurus is a buzz word created to describe the act of modifying a published source by substituting synonyms for words to fool plagiarism detection software, often resulting in the creation of meaningless text.

Neuroskeptic’s article was not meant to be funny. It was intended as a serious discussion of the contamination of academic literature by journals publishing ostensibly rigorous studies that are far from acceptable academic standards or simply outrageous fakes, thereby presenting serious credibility issues for science.

Safeguarding publication quality is where an unusual paper has been helpful. Published online in May 2018 in the Open Review of Educational Research and titled ‘Is peer review in academic publishing still working?’ the fourteen authors, drawn from ten universities (how do so many people do that?), do not reach a clear position in response

to their own question. Surprisingly, the journal editor does. The editor, also one of the fourteen authors by the way, declares at the end of the article that “... peer review certainly is not fool-proof but it is one of the best means for preserving objectivity, containing bias, for protecting the author against undue ideological influence, and for making sure that good quality papers are published irrespective of their source” (p.112). One of the best it may well be, but it is apparent we must do very much better, as the cogent article written by former Professor of Economics at Flinders University, Judith Sloan, points out in *The Weekend Australian* (20-21 October, 2018).

What is unusual in the Open Review paper is that its peer review process names the reviewers and publishes their assessments. This voyeuristic experience for readers might be worthy of consideration as an academic development strategy for writers and reviewers in academic development journals. Helpfully, the paper canvasses the pitfalls of doing this. Elements of this model are now used in other formats such as the comments appended to academic blogs. An example: the blog by Jason Lodge in *The Conversation* (11 October, 2018) and the readers’ comments.

Students and academics continue to perpetrate hoaxes. One of the most audacious is described in *The Dreadnought Hoax*, published in 1983. This hoax would surely have provoked war if carried out. Prior to the First World War a small group of Cambridge students planned to acquire a set of German Army officer uniforms, take command of a detachment of German soldiers on the German-French border, and march them across the frontier to see what would happen. One can only speculate about the outcome of this prank.

Robert Cannon is a Visiting Fellow at the Development Policy Centre at the Australian National University and the Education and Research Adviser to Australia’s education aid program, INOVASI, in Indonesia.
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Back in 2013 when Australian Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) and Pro Vice-Chancellors (Teaching and Learning) nominated the issues they imagined they would need to tackle by 2018, the majority nominated their top priority as curriculum design. To help senior executives responsible for teaching and learning in their institutions consider the challenges of whole-of-institution curriculum renewal, *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* commissioned a series of reviews by experts in curriculum design to provide guidance based on their analysis of the existing research in the field. Our authors came up with four strategies for supporting curriculum design in higher education.

John Biggs believes that the best place to start designing the curriculum is by clearly identifying the course level outcomes and ensuring that the students are captured in a “web of consistency” (Biggs and Tang, 2011, p. 99) at the subject level. Biggs (2014) provides numerous examples of how his version of outcomes-based learning has been implemented across the sector. He found constructive alignment to be an effective approach to curriculum change but it requires time and effort to develop the institutional policies and procedures needed support a systems approach to designing teaching and assessment.

Gerlese Åkerlind (2015) described a bottom-up approach to curriculum design based on variation theory which she characterises as a development of the

Strategies for supporting curriculum design

Peter Kandlbinder

phenomenographic research tradition that came out of the University of Gothenburg in the 1970s. Åkerlind finds variation theory can marry a phenomenographic understanding of the content of learning with an awareness of the different aspects of disciplinary concepts. An analysis that structures how students describe their experiences of learning can be used to organise the different ways students are able to understand the same experiences. Using a map of legal reasoning developed with her law colleagues, Åkerlind provides a practical demonstration of how variation theory helps to structure the curriculum around a threshold concept leading to a more effective learning experience.

Peter Goodyear (2015) looks more broadly at higher education practice to argue that there needs to be a shift of focus towards design in order to cope with the pressures increasingly placed on staff and resources. Goodyear’s concept of the curriculum as a design for learning expands the core conceptions of what teaching work entails and describes the qualities that can be observed when teaching is defined as a design activity. Goodyear draws on philosophy to bring together issues of practical and theoretical significance to explore the concept of ‘designerly ways of knowing’ highlighting the importance of studying the products of the design process as much as the practices and processes of design. Goodyear concludes design will take a central place in the curriculum when students take greater control over the design of their own learning tasks and learning environments.

Angela Carbone, Julia Evans and Jing Ye (2016) complete the reviews, arguing that teaching quality often refers solely to the characteristics of the teacher while the teacher is only one of a number of elements influencing student learning. Carbone, et al. present an alternative definition of teaching quality that

focuses on student achievement in course units. Their framework for unit quality is based on attributes revealed in a study of student evaluations. They define a quality unit as one that aims to enhance quality assurance with better unit design practices, such as on-going evaluation and development. Carbone, et al. set out standards against five facets of unit design: including teaching; learning outcomes; learning activities; assessment and feedback; and unit resourcing, that can be used to evaluate quality in the cycle of unit accreditation and improvement.

Each of these strategies adds a piece to our understanding of curriculum change whether at the institutional, curriculum team or individual practice level. By describing different strategies for engaging academic staff in curriculum design *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* hopes to provide insight into future directions for higher education research and development. With the next priorities survey set to be sent out shortly, no doubt additional aspects of curriculum design will be identified for investigation to ensure students experience the highest quality learning environments.

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The reviewer

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Bill Zealey (centre) with astronomy students

Chapter 11 relates to the academic's role in the laboratory, their teaching methods and rapport with students. The authors stress that academics should adopt a professional attitude to laboratory classes, prepare fully for each class, understand the equipment and be ready to answer student's questions. The stress on the importance of the academic's demeanor in the laboratory is particularly welcome. The student's laboratory experience can be marred by an academic's demeanor. In the distant past senior academics saw laboratory classes as a chore. Academics should be role models and show their engagement in the subject. Laboratory classes provide an opportunity to find out where the students are in their learning and to recognize those having difficulties. Cameos of student experiences in laboratories are used to illustrate the pros and cons of laboratory design and throughout the Guide short examples of best and worst practice along with student comments pepper the Guide. It would have been instructive if similar academic comment was included. And finally, course evaluation methods are discussed.

Perhaps progress has been more rapid than the authors initially thought. Many of the examples of improvements to the laboratory learning experience lend themselves to the use of computer-based learning techniques. Over the past decade several universities, including my own, have implemented computerised laboratory class administration, including computer based prelabs, videos, and spreadsheet-based results and analysis. This frees up academics to spend more time with the students in the laboratory. It would be of use if the scope of the Guide could be expanded to include such advances. However this omission does not detract from the usefulness of the Guide which provides a valuable introduction for young academics teaching for the first time in a laboratory.

The reviewer

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Improving teaching and learning in science and engineering laboratories

Caroline Baillie, Trina Jorre De St Jorre, Elizabeth Hazel

Twenty years have passed since the first edition of this Guide was written by Hazel and Bailie and, as the authors state, much work has been done since then. Faced with increasing class sizes and diminishing resources, laboratory classes have evolved to be almost unrecognisable. The authors have set themselves the challenge of dealing with the whole gamut of laboratory learning - structured investigations; open unstructured investigations, and projects.

Early sections provide a brief overview of the desired outcomes of laboratory sessions with valuable, anecdotal evidence to make classes more enjoyable and meaningful.

In chapters 3 to 6 the different types of laboratory methods are introduced and the underlying design and delivery of classes discussed from a student-learning point of view. Chapter 5 identifies the many disadvantages of 'controlled exercises' and suggests improvements. While controlled exercises are clearly less motivational, they provide the opportunity for students from different backgrounds to become skilled in using equipment and following instructions. Such exercises are one of the few ways of handling large first year classes. In

discussing projects, in chapter 6, the authors identify the need for proper supervision with clear timelines and outcomes. Small class projects, when properly designed, can provide learning experiences supporting a range of outcomes not easily delivered by other learning experiences.

Chapters 7 to 10 discuss improving the quality of the learning experience, assessment, and plagiarism. Much of this is of a general nature but plays a major role in how students and academics interrelate in the laboratory and approach learning and teaching. Students with little experience in laboratory work require careful guidance while more advanced students need autonomy. Both extremes can be catered for by self-paced laboratory programs with clear interim outcomes, something best suited to small laboratory classes. Providing feedback is also an important part of teaching, often forgotten in the rush of marking. The authors deal with the use of scoring tools (rubrics) which can streamline the administration of large laboratory classes and lend themselves to computerisation. Plagiarism and the falsification of results have a chapter of their own.



A traditional exam An unconventional assessment

Adina Stan, Mahnaz Armat, Elizabeth Rosser, Elyssebeth Leigh

At the HERDSA 2018 conference our team of researchers presented a poster titled: Evaluating United Nations Development Projects: A Traditional Exam that Assesses Unconventionally. Our summative assessment model locates learners as specialists required to deconstruct and question a real-life project conducted towards achieving a United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG). The exam task is to assess the effectiveness of the project from within its social, economic and political context.

Learners prepare for this role as researchers via classroom activities and use of our Beginner's Guide to Critical Evaluation developed by Elizabeth and Adina. We give them general information about the exam project, including the country and focus issue of the project (i.e. child malnutrition in Guinea Bissau). As they enter the exam room, these 'known conditions' shift the focus of the exam process, from knowledge recall and reporting to active analysis and evaluation of new data. Thus we reverse traditional exam structures and make this an unconventional assessment task.

Traditional exams privilege learners' capacity to memorise content for the purpose of manipulating it within the

context of an unknown question. In contrast, our learners know the exact exam questions, and have practised examinable skills prior to the exam. However, they do not know the specific project they will evaluate. In traditional exams learners construct answers to questions. This approach requires learners to use analytical and evaluative skills to deconstruct a particular MDG project. This places their capacity to question at the forefront of the assessment, within a context of urgency requiring them to perform mental functions immediately. We create this as a research and rehearsal process with the added immediacy of being in a role.

When we began working, existing course documents identifying the learning goals referred to specific problem-solving models, developing a personal approach to problem solving, creating solutions to wicked problems, and developing action plans. We quickly realized that missing from this was a focus on evaluating the learning and decided to design an assessment process that would build an effective 'bridge' for the development of independent thinking. We prepared our Beginner's Guide to Critical Evaluation' as a toolkit which learners personalise and develop further in their own unique style, thus focusing their attention on unpacking and questioning data rather

than continuing to engage uncritically with existing ideas.

We are aware of the motivational value of an exam format as creating a sense of urgency and providing a point for focused work on consolidating knowledge and skills. We felt it was important to provide a 'staged event' for which students must stand and deliver in the moment. We also wanted the task to provide an impetus for rehearsal and refinement. Collaborative classroom settings create community competence, enabling everyone to leverage the competence around them. Conversely, individuals need motivation to pursue personal learning development within the context of such collaborative activities. We wanted to create productive pressure to consolidate learning, achieve enculturation towards tertiary study and ensure that learners focus on the new skills they need to develop.

After working through critical analysis of MDG documents in the process of learning requisite skills the students enter the exam space knowing they will work on an unfamiliar MDG document using known skills. They are also aware that assessment criteria rewards demonstration of analytical and evaluative thinking as manifested in their detailed mark-up of the project document including judgements about the value/validity of the project, originality of approach to critical analysis, capacity for questioning data and relevance of interpretation.

Outcomes are impressively positive with learners addressing all assessment criteria, albeit with varying degrees of insight. What is most rewarding during the grading process is seeing how all authors demonstrate original approaches while staying true to the task. Their mark-ups and interpretive conclusions are strongly in role, and are both relevant to the content of the project document and to the exam task parameters.

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of the growing pressures of required research outputs, increasing student numbers and administrative demands. This has become a topic of conversation communities, which are collaborative cross-institutional networks active in Australia since 2008. Our research has also identified key themes in the institutional context. Institutions can go beyond the formulaic application of TPS for tenure and promotion and access the potential benefits for institutional strategy, as well as practices and attitudes related to student learning and teaching quality.

We consider the workshop approach to be a key to effective TPS development. As a first output from this research project, a TPS workshop was developed and facilitated in 2018 by Professor Schönwetter and project research assistant Nicole Gareau-Wilson at the University of Manitoba. The participants' feedback confirmed the impact of the free writing exercises, the personal development focus of TPS as well as importance of the collaborative group discussions and sharing of experiences. The practice-focused learning activities engaged participants in their personal journey as well as their longer-term goals.

We are planning a series of workshops in our 2019 'TPS tour'. Together with Professor Schönwetter, we will deliver these at the annual Canadian EDC and STLHE conferences in February and June. In addition, tailored workshops are available for Australian universities interested in enhancing the value of TPS for their staff and their institution. We are also planning to present the TPS research findings at the Auckland HERDSA conference in July 2019.

Links

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Developing a teaching philosophy An international collaboration

Gesa Ruge

Why should an academic develop a teaching philosophy and how can it benefit the individual and the institution? As the work of academics is increasingly being defined in terms of a set of competencies, teaching philosophy statements are likely to become more important for teaching academics.

When I approached Coralie McCormack and Robert Kennelly with the idea of a research study to investigate Teaching Philosophy Statements (TPS) in today's contexts, they suggested we invite their colleague and friend Dieter Schönwetter, co-author with Laura Sokal and Lynn Taylor: *Teaching philosophies reconsidered* (IJAD 2002). Professor Schönwetter, based at the University of Manitoba, is a leading academic and educator for higher education learning and teaching and TPS. Dieter kindly agreed to join our research team.

Through our research we hope to develop a more holistic understanding of TPS values to support academics in their teaching philosophy journey, and encourage the development of reflective practice and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Our research project seeks to answer the question: *What is the value of a teaching philosophy for today's academics and their institutions?*

I know the teaching philosophy journey through my own experience. I still recall the transformative experience of attending my first TPS workshop, led by Coralie McCormack and Robert Kennelly at HERDSA 2012 in Hobart. At that point, I struggled to reflect on, and express, my personal beliefs and values for student learning and how these played out in my teaching practice. Through the subsequent process of completing my HERDSA fellowship journey, TPS has become a positive baseline for my educational practice – SoTL and engagement with students and the broader institutional context. This is also part of the Australian practice of developing a TPS as published in the TATAL (Talking about Teaching and Learning) workbook by Stuart Schonell and colleagues (HERDSA, 2016).

Our international research project and interviews with Canadian 3M and HERDSA Fellows has identified additional advantages of TPS for the individual and the institution. Findings include how TPS development supports the individual's sense of self, which over time contributes to career, academic identity, student learning engagement, mentoring of colleagues and reflective practice and strategies over time.

In supporting academic colleagues to develop their own TPS I have heard

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